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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 001152

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNSC](#) [BM](#) [TH](#)  
SUBJECT: READOUT: SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR SOCIAL ISSUES  
DISCUSSES BURMA WITH PRIME MINISTER'S POLITICAL ADVISOR

Classified By: Political Officer J.R. Littlejohn, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) In a February 12-13 visit to Bangkok, Special Representative for Social Issues, Ambassador Grover Joseph Rees raised concern about Burma's human rights record with the Prime Minister's Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs, Ambassador Surapong Jayanama. Surapong offered a frank assessment of Thailand's engagement with Burma in the current political environment, and disparagingly labeled ASEAN's past approach of constructive engagement as "many doing nothing." He also urged the USG to support the current Thai administration, claiming its policies were more democratic and favorable toward human rights than the Thaksin administration's. End Summary.

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

2. (C) On February 11, Special Representative for Social Issues Ambassador Grover Joseph Rees called on the Prime Minister's Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs, Ambassador Surapong Jayanama. Rees explained the purpose of his visit was to place the spotlight on social issues, including the use of rape as a state instrument. Rees expressed USG satisfaction with the fact that 9 members of the UNSC voted for a strong and detailed resolution critical of actions of the military government of Burma, including widespread rape of ethnic minority women and girls by government soldiers. He added that China and others who did not support the resolution did not refute the propriety of raising human rights concerns with Burma, which left an opening to pursue these issues in multiple venues.

A REGIONAL ISSUE

3. (C) Surapong said that ASEAN should support the UN Secretary General's efforts in Burma, and quite possibly

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could play a role complimentary to United Nations efforts. He suggested that the USG try to keep Burma on the UN radar in every available venue, including the UN General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and the Third Committee. He suggested the idea of creating an international fact-finding mission as another mechanism for applying pressure on the regime, and creating international community awareness (even if such a team were refused entry).

4. (C) Although Surapong said that ASEAN's past policy of "constructive engagement" essentially amounted to "many doing

nothing," he was quick to point out that the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC) made some progress. However, he said the parliamentarians' capabilities to influence policy were limited because the power to make and honor decisions still rested with their respective governments. Surapong said that because of the long and porous border, Thailand was more directly affected by what happens in Burma and therefore the interests and solutions were more complex.

#### INTERIM GOVERNMENT: ETHICS IN FOREIGN POLICY

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15. (C) Ambassador Rees suggested that Thailand raise concerns about rape and other human dignity issues with Burma on a regular basis and in all applicable venues. Surapong offered that the Thai interim government policy since October 1 has been to reintroduce ethics into foreign (and domestic) policy. He said applying ethics in foreign policy meant different things, but support of human rights was a top priority. He said that the interim government of Thailand had been careful in dealing with Burma. He mentioned that the interim government had undertaken no new initiatives to engage amicably with the Burmese, although existing projects that did not violate the principles of good governance would continue to be supported.

16. (C) Surapong then launched into a polite but forceful discourse about what he described as the correct relationship that Prime Minister Surayud's government has with Burma, in comparison to the Thaksin government, which he deemed undemocratic. He said that outsiders seemed to focus on elections, but that democracy required more than just elections.

17. (C) Surapong said that since the interim government's appointment, the spirit, practices, and implementation of

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policies had all been democratic in nature. He said extrajudicial killings, and disappearances no longer occurred, as they had under deposed PM Thaksin. He said the USG's concern for human dignity and human rights should lead it to support the interim administration. Rees reiterated the purpose of his visit was to encourage placement of social issues in the region on the leadership's agenda. He also suggested that advocating support for human dignity issues, and particularly taking a strong stand against the systematic rape of women and girls by Burmese government soldiers, is one way this government could demonstrate the democratic spirit it purports to embody.

#### REFUGEES ON THE BORDER

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18. (C) Ambassador Rees suggested that Thailand reconsider its policy of denying new asylum seekers entry into refugee camps along the border. He noted that in recent meetings with representatives of Burmese ethnic minority groups he had been told that Thai authorities in at least some border areas had recently tightened the definition of "persons fleeing armed conflict" so as to exclude virtually all new cross-border asylum seekers. In response, Surapong suggested that Thailand's policy was a domestic issue, and that the Thai were doing more than most. He said that the Thai could not respond to the flow of refugees alone and that they needed help (read: funding). Ambassador Rees noted that the United States gives substantial support for the operation of the camps and had also begun to accept Burmese refugees in Thailand for resettlement. He offered to inquire about additio'@=QP\_)QjQQ:QJ